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FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8378
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1754
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 1268
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
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RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE VIENNA AU
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SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN AND SCA/PPD

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SCA DAS Feigenbaum Visit to Kyrgyzstan: Muslim
Outreach

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¶1. (U) SCA DAS Feigenbaum and the Ambassador welcomed the Chief Mufti of Kyrgyzstan, his deputy, the Human Rights Ombudsman, and a group of 40 representatives of civil and religious society to the October 17 dinner in Bishkek. This year, Embassy Bishkek held two Iftaar dinners, one in the north and one in the south.

¶2. (SBU) The dinner was well received, and both the Mufti and the Ombudsman joined the Ambassador and Feigenbaum in making welcoming remarks. The Mufti commented that he was impressed by how much attention the United States was placing on improving relations with the Muslim community. The Mufti said that the United States held Iftaars in the two primary regions of Kyrgyzstan and noted this was something his own government had yet to do.

¶3. (SBU) During a separate meeting October 17 with Jolbors Jorobekov, the director of the State Agency for Religious Affairs (SARA), DAS Feigenbaum inquired about the current role of religion in Kyrgyzstan. Jorobekov stated that after becoming independent fifteen years ago, his country has witnessed a steady influx of various Christian and Muslim sects, some with clear intentions to proselytize and convert the population. He asserted that, although these actions are legal and not the cause of social tension in the larger cities of the country where the population is ethnically mixed, Christians attempting to convert Muslims in the mountainous villages draw sharp criticism from members of the community. Jorobekov claimed to have received many complaints from rural communities and, fearing tensions might escalate into violence, has acted as intermediary between the religious groups and disgruntled villagers. He stated that, while defending the rights of all religions to practice freely is one of his many roles as director of SARA, convincing Christian missionaries to be respectful and consider the mentality of rural community members has been the most challenging.

¶4. (SBU) DAS Feigenbaum inquired about Kyrgyz plans to introduce a new law on religion and inquired why it was

necessary. Jorobekov, who is pushing for a new law according to the more restrictive model, admitted a law should not be necessary and was unable to explain the necessity convincingly.

Yovanovitch